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COMMISSION ON CIA ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE UNITED STATES  
Washington, DC 20500

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David W. Belin,  
Executive Director

April 10, 1975

MEMORANDUM

TO : The File  
FROM : David W. Belin  
SUBJECT : Interview with Mr. William K. Harvey

Transcript: 178-10004-10324

Tape: 178-10004-10392

Mr. Belin: This is an interview that I've had with Mr. William K. Harvey, 1611 Northwood Drive, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240. I am going to make a transcript of this interview which has taken place on April 10, 1975 in Mr. Harvey's home, and I will send to Mr. Harvey for his review a copy of the transcript for his additions or corrections or changes, and then what we'll do, we'll ask that the transcript as corrected be attached in an affidavit form for forming a part of the record of the Commission.

Mr. Harvey is a native of Indiana. He was born on September 13, 1915 in Danville, Indiana. He graduated from High School in Haute. He is a graduate of the University of Indiana Law School (1937). He was Associate Editor of the Law Review and was a member of the Order of the Coif. After briefly practicing law in Maysville, Kentucky, he joined the FBI in the Fall of 1940.

Mr. Harvey: --and forgive; the brownie points on the Order of the Coif ; that has no business --

B: All right. I want to put it in for my records.

H: I merely noticed in your Martindale biography that you were also a member.

B: He basically was with the FBI during the War, working for a substantial amount of that time in Washington on German intelligence matters; eventually worked on the Soviet Desk and then joined the CIA in 1947, first being in charge of the Soviet Branch. He went to Berlin in the Fall of 1952 where he was stationed --

*W.H.*  
UNMARKED  
MAY CONTAIN NATL SECURITY INFORMATION

- H: Would you make that please -- Do you mind my interrupting?
- B: Sure - go ahead.
- H: Make that Soviet Intelligence Branch.
- B: -- and he was in charge of the Soviet Intelligence Branch of the Agency --
- H: --which is a lesser position than the other reads like.
- B: All right. He went to Berlin in the Fall of 1952 where he was Station Chief until 1959. He came back to Washington in the Fall of 1959 where he stayed until June of 1963, except for possible short periods of temporary duty --
- H: -- except for several periods of temporary duty.
- B: -- except for several periods of temporary duty abroad. He went to Rome in June 1963 where he was Station Chief until 1966. He came back to the Agency in Washington in 1966 and he retired from the Agency in 1967 on December 31. Now, Mr. Harvey, does that summarize basically part of your background, at least that we discussed?  
*in sb*
- H: That is correct. I would like to add one thing, if I may. During both the Berlin and Rome periods and for a considerable period of time in Washington after I returned from Berlin I was on the roles of the Foreign Service of State, which raises a little question of propriety. But I want you to know that in the handling of this.
- B: All right. I first asked you with regard to any knowledge of any assassination plans or plots within the Agency concerning Patrice Lumumba and you might indicate what your response was to that, Mr. Harvey.
- H: I have no personal knowledge of any such plan or operation within or on the part of the Agency.
- B: I also asked you apart from the question of Fidel Castro whether or not you had any knowledge of any assassination plans or plots in the Agency that involved any other foreign leader.  
*MH*

H: Beyond the loose talk, "Would it be desirable" or "Wouldn't it be fine if", I do not.

B: You know of no other plans except Castro. Is that correct?

H: No. Plans in the sense that a decision was made to attain that objective and an actual plan or operation started for that purpose, I do not.

B: All right. One of the reasons that we're here is to discuss the question of what knowledge you had about this whole area, and I believe you indicated that at one time you had a conversation with someone in the Agency concerning what that person called a request from the White House for the Agency to develop what was called an "executive action capability". Did you have such a conversation with anyone in the Agency?

H: Yes, I did.

B: And who was that?

H: Richard Bissell.

B: And I believe you indicated that that took place in either 1961 or 1962. Is that correct?

H: To the best of my recollection that particular discussion probably took place in the latter part of 1961.

B: Do you remember what Richard Bissell --  
could

H: --it just conceivably/have been very early '62.

B: Do you remember what Richard Bissell told you and what you told him?

H: Not precisely.

B: Do you remember that he in substance said that the White House or someone in the White House had raised the question of whether or not the Agency should develop what was called an "executive action capability", a capability of assassination or liquidation of leaders of foreign countries?

H: To the best of my recollection that was stated.

B: Was it stated just once or perhaps on more than one occasion?

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H: I can only be certain as to once.

B: All right. But it might have been on more than one occasion?

H: That's possible, but I have no real recollection that -- the statement which is best I can recall is that the White House has more than once raised the question of whether we should have a capability for executive action.

B: OK. I believe you indicated to me that you first learned about the Castro operations from Bissell who instructed you to talk to Sheffield Edwards who had been involved with the operation before you became involved. Is that correct?

H: To the best of my recollection I may have been told of the operation before I was asked to discuss it with Edwards and take it over. I cannot be certain whether there was one discussion of this or two. I think possibly I may have known about it before I was asked to take it over.

B: All right. And then after you were asked were you briefed at all by Bissell or did you get your initial briefing from Sheffield Edwards?

H: I was only briefed by Bissell that such an operation had been mounted, what the objective was, and that it had been handled through Sheffield Edwards. I do not recall if he went into further detail or not, but in other words whether or not he may have said that a contact was made with this person or this type of person. But in any event it was not a briefing as such or in any detail. It would merely have been a summarizing of remarks.

B: All right. Then you did get a briefing in detail though from Sheffield Edwards, is that correct?

H: Yes.

B: And Edwards was in what capacity at that time?

H: At that time he was Chief of the Office of Security.

B: All right. Then did he put you in touch with the case officer?

H: Yes.

B: And that was Mr. O'Connell, is that correct?

H: Correct.

B: Now, I believe, that you said that prior to this time you had had contact with Robert Maheu because you had been both in the same FBI training class together but that you didn't have any contact with Maheu during this period of time to any degree. Is that correct?

H: The last time that I saw Maheu or talked with Maheu or had any direct or indirect communication with Maheu would have been about 1946, possibly '47.

B: All right. I believe you said as you went through the entire analysis of the plan you called it among other things a "damn fool idea to start with" -- I'm saying you called it in our prior conversation today before we started taping this interview, and you thought it had been handled in an incredibly amateurish fashion. Is this accurate?

H: I'd like to be sure that this is precise. This was my tentative opinion of it.

Whether I expressed exactly those words either to Colonel Edwards or to Bissell, I am not sure. But I may very well have I may have expressed them subsequent to that time.

B: You also stated that you thought--you also stated to me today that you thought we were dealing with what you referred to as a huge hand grenade, that you could not afford to have go off, so far as outside knowledge of it is concerned.

Ford  
B: That is correct.

H: /It was not just a question of my not being able to afford that it go off, but in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs failure, that was not the kind of an explosion that the Government, the Agency, or anybody else could well afford

B: And one of the concerns you had, I believe, was that so many people seemed to know about the plan. Is that correct?

H: That is correct.

B: Do you have any opinion as to whether or not Castro might or might not have known about it?

H: Given the capabilities of Castro's security apparatus and the general sieve-like character of the Cuban community in exile and the number of people who knew at least something about this particular incident or operation, before I had any connection with it, or later as a result of things that occurred before I had any connection with it, I think and thought at the time that it was quite conceivable that it had been penetrated. I cannot honestly state that I had at that time any firm reason to

believe that "Castro was aware of this operation".

B: I believe that you discussed this with Edwards and then O'Connell and then with Helms. Is that correct?

H: Yes.

B: And I think you also said that if you got involved you felt you had to take over the contact with John Roselli to have control of the situation. Is that correct? And that

H: /I wanted everyone else cut out.

B: You met Roselli first in New York and when, approximately?

H: To the best of my recollection about early April of 1962.

B: Roselli was working with Cuban exiles and with organized gamblers, is that correct?

H: That was my understanding.

B: And after that first meeting with Roselli at which I believe you indicated to me earlier -- and when I say "earlier", we had an extensive interview before we started taping here - is that correct?

H: That's correct.

B: After that first meeting, you feel that O'Connell from that time forward was not involved in the situation. Is that correct? So far as you were concerned?

H: ... far as I was concerned and I shortly thereafter expressed the conviction that that should be the case to which Colonel Edwards agreed. I do not remember the exact date that O'Connell was instructed to stay completely out of this operation -- instructed by Colonel Edwards; that is. But it would have been some time rather shortly after this.

B: And then as I understand it basically, you reported to Helms that you were taking -- you had already told Helms you were taking it over -- I think you also told me you were concerned about the possible -- what you called blackmail of the Cuban exile community to blackmail the U.S. Government.

*With  
EFFORTS*

*MASH*

H: -- or of any other individuals involved in this.

B: If by that you use blackmail in the broader term of not just payment of money for an individual but doing a favor, even taking action that the government might not otherwise want to take.

H: That is correct. Or its being used in a vindictive sense, if you will if proposals or policies or particular things these individuals and groups wanted were refused.

By what means

B: /were they going to try and assassinate Cuba -- or a Cuban leader - Castro?

H: I was told that there were two possibilities - rifle fire and the use of poison.

B: On the rifle fire, did you participate with the financing to enable one of these Cuban exile groups that Roselli was involved with to acquire guns and ammunition?

H: I did participate in one delivery of arms and some related equipment.

B: And where did that delivery take place?

H: It took place in Miami.

B: And do you know approximately when that took place? Might it have been in late '62 or early '63?

H: Well, it certainly was not in '63. I do not believe it was as late as late '62. To the best of my recollection, it would have been about mid-'62.

B: All right. Did John Roselli ever ask any money personally for any of the work he did on this?

H: No. He did not. And I am sure he knew that had he asked, given the amount of his own personal funds he had expended in travel expenses and so forth, that he probably could have gotten money. As a matter of fact, I believe that Roselli made it a point of pride to take absolutely nothing either in personal financial gain or to at any time then or since to use this in an effort to secure favorable U.S. Government consideration in any of the various problems he may have had with the U.S. Government.

*[Signature]*

- Now, Mr. Harvey,
- B: /do you know how much money was paid in the Summer of 1962 - mid-'62 - for these gun deliveries, approximately? *primarily for gasoline and maritime expenses.*
- H: I don't remember the exact amount that the shipment of arms was valued at. There was a not large cash payment made to this Cuban group. I believe it was in the low four figures, but the exact amount I do not remember.
- B: Plus or minus \$5,000?
- H: Certainly not plus, and I would think minus.
- B: Do you remember if it included both rifles and handguns?
- H: I believe that it did, yes.
- B: And I believe you also told me drugs such as anti-biotics.
- H: Yes, there were some medicinal drugs, anti-biotics, and so forth, which as I recall was a fairly minor part of this.
- B: Were the poison pills involved botulism pills?
- H: I don't know.
- B: They were pills which were to be used in - to dissolve in food or something of that nature?
- H: My understanding that they were - whether they were pills or what they were, I don't know, but a substance was to be orally administered, I believe in food or drink, but I'm not positive.
- B: Did you ever get a report from Roselli that the people had gotten into Cuba with the guns and with the pills?
- H: I did receive a report from Roselli that he had received from his Cuban contact that the arms had gotten in, the people had gotten in, and the material had gotten in, and that they had high hopes of success for the operation.
- B: But the - of course - there was no ultimate success so far as the killing of Castro was concerned.

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H: There was no ultimate success, and as far as I personally know, there was never even any credible attempt made.

B: Do you have any opinion why?

H: I don't know that I have any valid opinion why.

There are a great many things that could have happened. It wasn't tried, it was choked off, it was penetrated from the start - at least on the Cuban end -- that is the end in Cuba. When I say I had no personal knowledge of this, I am aware that Castro has claimed there were a number of attempts on his life. I am aware that he has blamed those on the U.S. in general and on CIA in particular. But I have no personal knowledge of facts which would prove that there was ever actually if you will, a shot fired or any poison administered, or any other attempt other than in the inchoate stage.

B: Mr. Harvey, did John McCone know at this time what was going on?

H: To my knowledge, he did not.

B: You were at a meeting of the Special Group (Augmented) in the Department of State in August of 1962 when someone brought up the possibility of liquidation of Castro, is that correct?

H: That is correct.

B: Do you remember what Mr. McCone did at the time?

H: Yes. He got rather red in the face and made a comment "Well, that's not something that should be discussed." Now, please don't hold me to these exact words.

*msh*  
B: That's to the best of your recollection?

H: The best of my recollection is I was at that meeting with John McCone. To the best of my recollection the remark that he made was a clear effort to stop any such proposals, suggestion or any discussion thereof at that meeting within that forum immediately.

B: Earlier, before that meeting, had you had any discussions with Richard Helms about whether or not McCone should be advised of what was going on after McCone became DCI?

H: Yes, I had.

B: And what was the substance of your conversation with Richard Helms?

H: I do not recall how the question came up as to whether the new DCI should be briefed or not. I may have raised it. But I did recommend to Mr. Helms that since this particular "operation" and the possible repercussions from it all stemmed from actions which had taken place long before either Helms or myself had had any personal connection with it, and before John McCone had had any connection whatever with the Agency, and since the decision had been made at that time that this should be sanitized, tied off and terminated as soon as practically feasible, I saw no reason why the new DCI should be briefed on it, and I strongly recommended that he not be.

B: Ultimately you decided that the plans had little chance of success and you decided to wind down the plans. Is that correct?

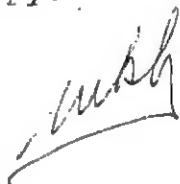
H: I would object to the word "ultimately". That is substantially correct if you put it within the time frame that I reached a tentative conclusion to that effect very shortly after I was able to fully debrief Roselli and assess what had gone on in the past, the people that we could find out that were involved in it who I checked out file-wise and so forth as against what we then knew of the general capability of effective action within Cuba.

B: And then in order to not have an explosion from a too-abrupt termination, you determined to gradually tie it down and wind it up, is that correct?

H: That is correct. Remembering, Mr. Belin, that in the initial phases of this it was quite obvious that there was an explosion potential here--an explosion not in the technical sense -- a flap potential, if you will, but it took some time to find out just what could be done and how it could be done, to try to sanitize the possible repercussions of this.

B: Any other thing that you wish to add for the record here?

H: Only that I assume you will write up your notes from our considerably more detailed discussion of this. If you do I would appreciate a copy.



B: You will get a copy of whatever I write in that regard.

H: The only other comment that I would like to make for this tape is that to the extent it is possible I would request that actual identities be sanitized from this insofar as it is possible to do so.

B: And that's for purposes of protecting rights of privacy to people including yourself?

H: Exactly. It is not as I said earlier in our informal conversation that this is ~~not~~ an oblique pleading of the Fifth Amendment. *Much*

B: I believe you then indicated to me that you went to Rome in approximately June of 1963.

H: That is correct. It was June 1963.

B: And had no further contact with this Cuban operation from that time forward. Is that correct?

H: That is correct.

B: Anything else you wish to add on the record? *(pt. IV)*

H: One please. One catch. There have, as you know, been some unfortunate and in my opinion distorted allegations about that that have surfaced publicly since then, but I have had no official connection with any Cuban operation of any kind since June--probably May would be more accurate--at the very latest--of May of 1963. And from the time that I left the Cuban task force in the early months of 1963--to the best of my recollection around March--I have in no sense attempted to keep current or involve myself in it in any sense whatever.

B: Anything else you'd wish to add?

H: You want this for the record--or off the record?

B: Either way.

H: I have nothing to add to the tape unless you have further questions.

B: No Sir, I just want to thank you very much for your cooperation and I'll get a transcript to you on this.

H: What I'd like to say--and this has no business in the tape--but you've been most courteous and most considerate and again, take it for what it's worth, I have tried very hard to give you an accurate recollection of this, and a full one.

B: Thank you very much.

(END OF TAPE)

*July 9 May 1975  
William R. Harvey*